



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



# **COL in the Commonwealth**

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

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## **BELIZE**

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## TARGETS 2021



Improved sustainable livelihoods  
**300,000 PEOPLE**



**470**  
**ORGANISATIONS**  
Improved organisational  
capacity to leverage ODL

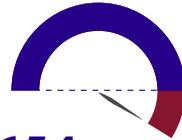


**1.4 million**  
**PEOPLE**  
Increased and equitable  
access to, and use of, quality  
learning opportunities

## ACHIEVED BY 2020



**257,484** people



Target  
**EXCEEDED**

**654** organisations



**880,039** people



## Introduction

Since its creation some 30 years ago, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has become a true catalyst for positive change for a third of the world's population. Our vision of “learning for sustainable development” means that learning must lead to social inclusion, economic growth and environmental conservation. This aligns COL's work with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all.”

COL harnesses the potential of open, distance and technology-enabled learning to help Member States accelerate progress towards achieving development outcomes.



To achieve outcomes and impact, COL has led six paradigm shifts:

- If the child cannot go to school, the school comes to the child.
- Technology-enabled learning can break open the ivory towers of tertiary education.
- Open educational resources (OER) are the answer to closed and costly textbooks.
- The digital divide can be transformed into a digital dividend.
- Literacy is not always a precondition for learning.
- The social capital of the mother is the most important determinant in bringing girls to school.

What are COL's key success factors? COL aligns its work with global priorities and ensures that it stays relevant to Member States' needs and priorities. COL is relevant, responsive and results oriented. The 2018–2020 Country Highlights summarise COL's progress towards achieving SDG4.

Professor Asha S. Kanwar  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*  
*Commonwealth of Learning*



## Highlights

Working in two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a crosscutting theme, COL uses pioneering models and approaches to achieve impact.

- COL has developed an innovative employability framework to strengthen and evaluate the impact of higher education institutions on graduates' employability, with a focus on industry and labour-market engagement.
- GIRLS Inspire has reached close to 81,000 girls and young women in remote and unreached communities, providing schooling and skilling them for livelihoods.
- The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model is being upscaled in partnership with national banks, moving from the meso to the macro level.
- The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme is now being implemented across the Commonwealth.
- Ambitious projects to improve gender equality in two Commonwealth regions have been launched. These holistic models are based on community mobilisation and address areas such as capacity building in education, gender-based violence, health, empowerment, economic opportunities, and policy.
- Blockchain technology, built according to open standards, was used to issue certificates for massive open online courses (MOOCs) in different disciplines.
- COL has developed a comprehensive solution for data resilience in education for small states facing climate-related disasters.
- The ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), held in Edinburgh, brought together close to 550 thought leaders, policy makers and practitioners to share best practices and harness innovation for change, with a view to providing employability skills to young people, offering a quality education to all regardless of circumstances, and identifying practical ways for technology to speed up our progress.



# Belize

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COL works with partners in Belize to expand access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. His Excellency Hubert John Charles, Resident Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates for Dominica, represents the Caribbean Region on COL's Board of Governors, and Dr Yvonne Palma, Education Officer, Employment Training and Education Services, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture (MEYSC) is COL's Focal Point for Belize.

COL's current work in Belize is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, open/innovative schooling, gender, OER, technical and vocational skills development, and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Belize have benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.

The following are the highlights from 2018 to 2020.



## Programmes

### VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Belize continues to be a member of VUSSC. Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC supports the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development.

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes while promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework.



COL is providing support to the University of Belize (UB) to expand access and strengthen capacity to deliver the Master of Educational Leadership online. In September 2018, UB aligned the VUSSC Master of Educational Leadership programme with national professional standards for educational leaders and with UB regulations. In November 2018, a capacity-building workshop was held at UB with 23 participants to strengthen staff capacity to deliver online graduate education. In February 2019, 38 students enrolled in a *Master of Educational Leadership* course customised from VUSSC materials.

## TEACHER EDUCATION

The Teacher Education initiative works with partner institutions to improve teacher quality and achieve better learning outcomes for students. Through the “Teacher Futures” model, it works with governments, teacher education institutions, schools and other partners to deliver quality learning opportunities through in-service, technology-enabled teacher professional development.

In partnership with the University of the West Indies, the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics — which comprises diagnostic tools for special-needs students — was developed and piloted in Belize and Jamaica.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL’s TVSD initiative supports partners in harnessing ODL to increase access to demand-driven, competency-based skills training. TVSD is increasingly focused on innovative models that use ODL for theory, with practical skills development organised in workplaces and communities.

TVSD has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses*, *Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*.

Most recently, participants from Belize were involved in the online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification Assessor Training (CVQAT)*, which was developed in partnership with the Grenada National Training Agency, the TVET Council Barbados, and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago.

## OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

OIS increases access to secondary education, especially for out-of-school youths. COL's approach focuses on the training of teachers in eLearning, using OER, improving the management of open schools, and supporting the use of appropriate technologies in teaching and learning.

Belize has embraced the OIS model, and recent activities have included institutional and faculty capacity building through developing curricula and resources and establishing cost-effective models of schooling. Other areas include training teachers in how to use TEL and how to develop eLearning OER content for schools. COL regularly consults with MEYSC on the model's progress and has initiated discussions about a monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Through the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, Belize works to promote relevant policies and strategies among governments and organisations to enhance quality learning.

Participants from Belize successfully participated in several intakes of a course on *Developing and Teaching Online* organised in partnership with the University of Mauritius.

In December 2018, a ministerial delegation from Belize visited three distance education schools and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, Canada, with a view to learning about open schooling in Canada and strengthening the international community of practitioners.

In October 2019, COL's Education Specialist: Open Schooling visited Belize to discuss the development of digital content and plans for piloting that content in selected schools or distance outreach centres. He also visited several "evening" schools that support out-of-school children, youths and adults.

## GENDER

COL's Gender initiative supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. It aims to tackle the distinct challenges faced by girls/women and boys/men in regions where they are most disadvantaged, while also shifting the social norms that create and perpetuate gender inequalities. In Belize, discussions are under way with MEYSC to start a project tackling boys' underachievement.

## TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

This initiative aims to encourage more institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. Activities of the TEL initiative focus on the individual, institutional and country levels.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been organising a MOOC on *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning*. In 2018–2019, a total of 139 learners from Belize joined the course's third and fourth offerings.



## **Events and Special Activities**

### MOOC ON INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS

Twenty participants from Belize joined the MOOC on *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business*, which was offered jointly by COL and the Open University of Mauritius in May–June 2019.

### REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

The Caribbean regional meeting of the COL Focal Points took place on 30 and 31 August 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica to strengthen the effectiveness of COL's work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information about developments related to learning for sustainable development. Dr Yvonne Palma represented Belize at the meeting.



## REGIONAL WORKSHOP: WOMEN IN ICT

Mid-career women from tertiary institutions across the Caribbean came together for the *Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)* workshop from 11 to 13 June 2019 in Nassau, The Bahamas. Facilitated by COL and hosted by the Ministry of Education, The Bahamas, the event explored current technologies and trends in education, such as OER, and the role of AI in enhancing these technologies. It also used a gender lens to examine the threats and opportunities for AI in education. Two participants from Belize attended the workshop.

## NINTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM (PCF9)

Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond gathered at the historic Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland for PCF9, themed *Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning*. It was organised from 9 to 12 September 2019 in partnership with The Open University, UK.

The four days of insightful keynote addresses, engaging plenary panels, informative parallel sessions, and other programme highlights provided a unique opportunity to bridge traditional divides between borders and sectors. Discussions centred around four key sub-themes, *Opening Up Education, Equity and Inclusion, Technology and Employability*, and delegates appreciated the focus on new forum features: artificial intelligence, youth and girls' education and learners with special abilities. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers.

COL sponsored six delegates from Belize to attend PCF9. One participant from Belize attended the Interlocutors' Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9, and one participant joined COL's pre-forum OIS workshop.



## PCF9 Edinburgh Statement

Forum partners from over 60 countries believe that it is possible to significantly accelerate progress towards the aim and targets of SDG4 by prioritising the following collective actions now:

### 1. **Accomplishment at scale**

Mobilise an emergency response to ensure that all children in the Commonwealth, including girls, learners with different abilities, and learners from vulnerable and marginalised communities, experience a quality education focused on accomplishment, knowledge exchange and the continued ability to learn.

### 2. **Skills for productive lives**

Urgently create learning opportunities for marginalised, excluded, vulnerable and out-of-school young people to build skills for leading a productive life, embracing technology to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and confidence, and bridging accessible formal, non-formal and informal education.

### 3. **Creating new digital dividends**

Develop new, innovative, flexible modes of education to foster creativity, imagination and peer knowledge exchange, increase reach and ensure no one is left behind, through the use of appropriate media and delivery, including blended approaches to digital learning.

#### 4. **Teachers as skilled agents of change**

Teachers and teacher educators are the main agents of change for quality education and can be supported to catalyse action in their schools, communities and colleges as respected professionals who model lifelong learning. To do this we propose:

Creating **alternative, flexible and technology enabled pathways into teaching** to resolve the shortage of skilled and motivated teachers;

Expanding low-cost, highly effective ways to **support school-based teacher professional development** to build change capacity and capability within regional and national educational systems.

#### 5. **Positively disrupt higher education**

Support innovation for quality higher education; **strengthen the technology-enabled learning ecosystem** throughout the Commonwealth, including the scope to develop professional skills, recognition, validation and verification of experiential and prior learning through micro-credentialing and blockchain technology; expand the reach of open education for dispersed audiences; and improve barrier-free access to tertiary education.

#### 6. **Challenging assessment**

Radically relook at assessment models: build a culture of assessment to support employability and micro-entrepreneurship.

### **Our ambition is to achieve this through:**

*Bold inclusive collaboration;*

*Bringing together the diverse groups of critical thinkers, innovators and practitioners who can collaboratively make change happen by delivering quality education and lifelong learning for all;*

*Making greater use of data, evidence and storytelling to galvanise political will for enabling policies and well-resourced implementation plans;*

*Sustaining the momentum;*

*Building an active network of learning, support and action starting now.*

Sustaining and building our momentum for change, we aim to bring our key commitments to the fore of the policy agenda through the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and PCF10.



## New Publications and Resources

In 2018–2020, COL produced a number of publications and resources, including:

***Knowledge Series: Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials:  
A Guide for Practitioners***

As online learning and MOOCs become mainstream, it is important to explore new forms of credentialing. This publication offers a step-by-step guide to plan, design and implement micro-credentials and badges in diverse contexts and provides greater flexibility in the journey of the new learner-earner through a skills and capability framework.

***A Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development: SECONDARY***

This toolkit is for implementing school-based teacher development as a way to improve the performance of schools and raise the achievement of children. This valuable resource includes a detailed framework, which can be adapted to the context of a particular country, region, district or school, and offers practical daily activities for teachers.

***Guidelines on the Development of Open Educational Resources Policies***

This new publication provides specific tools to analyse current contexts and policy environments, understand issues related to copyright and licensing, and align policy in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The guidelines present a systematic process for designing and implementing OER policies and measuring their impact.

***A Guide to Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions:  
The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model***

This publication provides clear guidelines on how to integrate employability pathways into instructional systems. From career counselling to career support, the guide demonstrates how institutions can prepare graduates for employment or entrepreneurship.

***Gender Scorecard 2.0: Instructions and Templates***

This is a tool to audit the capacity of institutions to mainstream gender. It helps with analysing existing policies and practices and developing clear steps for the effective promotion of gender equity.

All COL publications can be found on its open-access repository at [oasis.col.org](https://oasis.col.org).





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